

## MERCER CORRIDOR PROJECT

The Mercer Corridor Project will meet all applicable state and federal environmental review requirements. The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is completing a federal Environmental Assessment (EA) and will then adopt it as a state Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), if appropriate, or adopt it as a SEPA Checklist. There will be a comprehensive public involvement process, including quarterly check-ins with City Council during the process. The following information explains the federal and state requirements guiding environmental documentation and how the Mercer Corridor Project relates.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) processes are dictated by the type of impacts and actions a project may have.

- The first level is for projects with minimal or no impacts.
- The second level is for projects with some impacts, but they are not significant or can be mitigated.
- The third level is for projects with impacts that are expected to be significant.

In general, NEPA is more complicated than SEPA. The following information summarizes both NEPA and SEPA environmental review processes.

Potential Impact*	Environmental Review and Documentation
None or minimal	<p><b>NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE)</b> No public review required. Documented by an Environmental Classification Summary Form. Generally requires some supporting documentation, generally two to 10 discipline reports.</p> <p><b>SEPA Categorical Exemption (CE)</b> No public review required. No documentation requirement.</p>
Some Impacts, but less than significant or can be mitigated	<p><b>NEPA Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)</b> Preliminary and Final EA plus 14-20 supporting documents or discipline reports</p> <p><b>SEPA Checklist - Determination of Non-significance (DNS)</b> Including supporting documentation. Usually less rigorous than an EA. A completed/approved EA can be used in lieu of a SEPA checklist.</p>
With Impacts, expected to be significant	<p><b>NEPA Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Record of Decision (ROD)</b> Draft and Final EIS plus 14-20 supporting documents or technical reports.</p> <p><b>SEPA Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Determination of Significance (DS)</b> Draft and Final EIS plus 14-20 supporting documents.</p>

\* The type of impact that triggers one level of environmental review under NEPA may require a different level under SEPA.

## **MERCER CORRIDOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS/TIMELINE**

March 2004 SDOT initiated the NEPA and SEPA environmental review process.

- Issued Determination of Significance (DS), as required under SEPA. The issuance of the DS initiates formal public input and review early in the project.

### Public and Agency Scoping

- The scoping period under SEPA was March 4 to March 25, 2004.
- SDOT hosted a public and agency scoping meeting on March 18, 2004.
- Although scoping is not required for an EA, public and agency comments will go into the record.

### Alternative identification and screening

- SDOT evaluated alternatives and recommended the Two-way Mercer with Narrow Valley Alternative for the environmental review
- The other two alternatives considered do not meet key objectives, including project purpose and need, and will not be included in the environmental document.

### Environmental Documentation

- The environmental documentation for the Two-way Mercer alternative is beginning. This includes traffic analysis, as well as preparation of reports for other environmental elements.
- A Draft EA will be completed late in 2005. At this time a public hearing on the Draft EA will be held.
- If during the development of the Draft EA it is determined that the project will have significant impacts that are not mitigatable, then additional studies will occur and a NEPA EIS will be developed.
- If the impacts remain at the level of non-significance, the EA will be finalized and submitted to the federal government. The NEPA process will be complete when a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is issued.
- After issuance of the FONSI the City will adopt the EA as either a SEPA EIS or SEPA Checklist depending on the results of the environmental review.